

# 8th Operations Group remembers 70 years

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The 8th Operations Group is throwing a Dining In Saturday in celebration of its 70th anniversary.

The 8th OG's history dates after World War I. On March 24, 1923 the Army authorized the 8th Pursuit Group. The group was activated almost eight years later at Langley Field, Va. Initially the group had two squadrons, the 36th and 55th Pursuit Squadron. However both operated from different bases, the 36th PS was assigned to Selfridge Field, Mich. and the 55th operated from Mather Field Calif. In June 1932, the group was reorganized as a combat unit. The 33rd and 35th Pursuit Squadrons joined the 36th, which moved to Langley. At the same time, the 55th transferred to Barksdale Field, La.

In November 1940, the 33rd PS transferred to another unit in Iceland, leaving the group with two squadrons. Ten days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the group was alerted to deploy to Australia. The 80th Pursuit Squadron joined the 8th PG.

The unit redesignated as the 8th Fighter Group in May 1942, with its pursuit squadrons renamed as fighter squadrons. While the group headquartered in Australia, the squadrons operated from forward bases in New Guinea. During early operations, the group concentrated on defense of Australia and Allied Territory in New Guinea. Despite numerous problems in the early stages of the war, the 8th FG overcame adversity and earned its first Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) in January 1943.

On December 26, 1944, the group earned its second DUC when, on short notice and armed only with machine guns, group fighters continuously strafed a Japanese naval task force for three hours, sinking one destroyer, and stopped the task force so that bombers from more distant bases could continue the attack.

The group spent the last months of the war conducting operations against Formosa and Japanese troops in Mainland China. On Aug. 14, 1945, the 35th Fighter Squadron scored the last aerial victories of the war, shooting down five Japanese aircraft before the Japanese surrendered the next day. During its involvement in World War II, the 8th FG participated in nine air campaigns. Its pilots shot down 446

aircraft, and created 24 aces. Following the war, the group spent the next few years providing air defense for Japan from several bases.

When the 8th Fighter Wing was created in August 1948, the 8th Fighter Group continued on as a subordinate component of the wing. The wing was redesignated as the 8th Fighter Bomber Wing on Jan. 20, 1950. The group initially consisted of two squadrons: the 35th and 36th. The 80th Fighter Squadron was later assigned Aug. 11, 1950.

Soon another war began. On June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded the South, starting a war that would last three years. The 8th FBW was the first fighter wing to fly combat missions, providing air cover for evacuations of Americans. It also earned the distinction of shooting down the first enemy aircraft of the war and the first confirmed kill in a fighter aircraft, both on the same day.

Throughout the war, the group conducted air-to-ground operations, provided close air support for United Nations ground forces and attacked supply and transportation targets. While the wing itself earned two Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citations, and ten campaign streamers, the 8th FBG earned a third DUC that is not shared by the wing. One of the group's flyers, Maj. Charles Loring, who served as operations officer for both the 36th FBS and 80th FBS, was awarded the Medal of Honor after he intentionally dove his crippled aircraft into an enemy antiaircraft site on Sniper Ridge in November 1952. On Oct. 1, 1957, the 8th FBG and its flying squadrons were inactivated.

In the early 1990's, the Air Force reorganized itself under a group structure. As a result, the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing became the 8th Fighter Wing. As part of this reorganization, the 8th Operations Group, originally known as the 8th Pursuit Group, and which served as the 8th Fighter Group during World War II and the 8th Fighter Bomber Group during the Korean War, was activated.

Today, the 8th OG continues to uphold its history of accomplishments. The 80th FS "Headhunters" and 35th FS "Pantons" are currently flying the F-16 fighter aircraft. The 8th OG excelled during the recent 2001 Pacific Air Forces Operational Readiness Inspection, earning an "Outstanding" rating for sortie generation.

May 1953 – 1st Lt. Joe Lynch, 35th Fighter Bomber Squadron pilot, sits in his F-86F Sabre. The dark blue stripes around the aircraft's nose indicates the 35th FBS. Today the flagship on the tail of the aircraft identifies the squadron.



May 1942 – Capt. Emmett "Cyclone" Davis, 8th Fighter Group commander, stands next to his aircraft. In 1942, the group changed from the 8th Pursuit Group to the 8th Fighter Group. The group was also known as Cyclone's Flying Circus in Davis's honor.

